1:Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1952
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

Marriage and Family Life

582 According to my Tukuna informants, theoretically a girl may marry as soon after the puberty ceremony as she wishes. However, in practice I have never heard of a girl marrying until the hair had grown anew and had been clipped again, while many remain spinsters for some years afterward, if not for their entire [836] lives. Even today sexual intercourse before the puberty ceremony is unimaginable and, according to some, this held formerly for premarital intercourse as well.

836 I have reason to suppose that nowadays the jungle and the silent waters of the igapó, over which the small fishing canoes rapidly glide without leaving any betraying evidence, conceal the secrets of many lovers, whose parents suspect nothing. The Tukuna, however, because of the few barriers to marriage apart from incest rules, vigorously resent any deceit on this score, which may result in very serious conflicts. Parents consider secret relations between a man and their daughter a grave offense; they demand an explanation from the imprudent man [584] who did not respect "their home" and advise him that he had better marry the girl. If he refuses, which almost never happens, his only recourse is flight.

684 Some thirty years ago a certain Marcolino čaitaʼ married the elder of two daughters of one dauraʼńkį. After some time he became enamored of his sister-in-law. If he had asked permission to marry her, dauraʼńkį probably would have given it, but čaitaʼ abandoned his wife and fled with her sister. Accompanied by his brother, dauraʼńkį furiously pursued the pair and overtook them; he slapped them both, bound the girl and threw her into his canoe, and let čaitaʼ go scot free on the beach. As soon as the son-in-law found himself free, he jumped on dauraʼńkį, who killed him with a club during the struggle.

[177] Rape never occurs among the Tukuna, who know of this crime only from the Neobrazilians. When I attempted to get some concrete information on this, those 684 whom I approached merely answered: "If she will not—who may take her?" Cer-648 tain *civilizados* who assumed that such a crime could be committed with impunity against an Indian woman have come off very badly with the Tukuna. A trader called Joaquim Balieiro arrived in his craft, manned by two civilized paddlers, at the place of an Indian on Lake Cajary, where he found at home only a young boy named Izidoro čéčaʼkakį and his virgin sister. The trader requested permission to pass the night in the house, which was granted. Later on, the three Neobrazilians conceived the plan of getting the boy drunk so as to be able to take advantage of the girl. They gave him plenty of *cachaça*, but let the cat out of the bag prematurely, before he had become sufficiently drunk. Thus čéčaʼkakį understood what was afoot and attacked the three with fury, shooting and killing the trader, while the paddlers barely succeeded in escaping. One of them, whom I knew personally, was gravely wounded. Back among their own kind, they said that čéčaʼkakį had assaulted them with intent of robbery.

Again, in a certain igarapé there dwelt an Indian who had two young daughters; farther upstream lived two rubber gatherers. Going down to their tent on the bank of the Solimões one day, these two found the Indian there. Seeing that he was lingering, the two hurried back, entered his house, deflowered the two girls, and then left in their canoe for their camp. Shortly after, the Indian returned

1:Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1952
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

and, learning what had happened, called some relatives, scouted out the two rubber gatherers by land, fired at them from the beach, and killed them both.

Courtship and marriage.—A type of marriage preferred by the Tukuna is illustrated in figure 12: A marries the sister of B, while B marries A's sister. Generally, the suitor asks for the girl through her paternal uncle, who also exercises decisive authority in this matter. The initiative never stems directly or indirectly from the girl. In ancient times the parents and uncles arranged the marriage when bride and groom were still children, sometimes only five years old, I was told. After puberty the young people were obliged to carry out the agreement made by the parents and were requested to "get used to each other." Personally, I have never come in contact with an arrangement of this sort.

Some youths who realize their moral or economic unfitness for marriage, or who are afraid of the girl's parents, delay excessively the declaration to her paternal uncle while continuing to boast before their comrades: "She is mine!" Thus they come to excite ridicule and are finally forced by their companions' derision to desist or finally to declare themselves. Perhaps the only intermediary the swain can procure is the girl's father; he, however, always sends the suitor to the girl's uncle, who has the right of veto, since the parents habitually avoid opposition in order not to provide a motive for future discord between the families. It is only afterward that the girl's mother has an understanding with her future son-in-law, seriously advising him to treat her daughter well; otherwise, she will take her back. Meanwhile the request and subsequent declarations are so handled that persons not concerned are never aware of them; any attempt by an outsider to interfere would be considered an affront. If the girl peremptorily refuses to accept the suitor, not even her uncle, notwithstanding that he has given his consent, can force the issue. A curious reason for refusal was given by dɔ'tanɲa when one bere' proposed marriage. She rejected him because he was "too hard a worker." bere' is known as one of the most diligent Indians in the region—a planter of large clearings, an assiduous fisherman, and an able canoewright. dɔ'tanɲa, known as a sluggard, has nothing and does not know how to make anything, lives at her brothers' expense, and with good reason was afraid that, if bere' were her husband, his activities would mean too much work for her.

Apparently, some suitors muster the necessary courage to declare themselves only after imbibing a good quantity of paiauarú at some feast attended by the girl's family. Even so, the business is broached without the other guests' being aware of it, since the youth never publicly announces his request but asks the girl's uncle privately, in some corner where no attention will be attracted. At the close of the party the numerous guests suddenly learn, though with no great surprise, that So-and-so and What's-her-name are already married (*que fulano e sicrana já estão casados*). It is not the custom to give presents either to the bride or to her parents, nor do the latter demand chores from the bridegroom before the wedding.

Polygamy.—It is legitimate for a man to marry more than one woman at the same time, but polygamy is rare. I heard of only one Indian who had three wives, viz., the late Domingos ču'nekɨ, who died between 1910 and 1920, last chief at Igarapé de São Jeronymo and a famous shaman. He married three sisters whom

2: Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1948
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

881 Several hours after midnight, half a dozen of the girl's relatives, holding her around the waist while her eyes are covered by the feather diadem, [535] dance back and forth toward the wall, which is cut open with a knife so that they finally pass through into the main room. As she is now more exposed to invisible forces, the relatives dance with her until near dawn, then slowly go outside and circle the house. At sunrise they uncover her eyes and have her throw a burning stick against a pole marked to represent the "enemy." She now walks without assistance and dances freely with the others in the house.

[302] Depilation follows. The girl sits on the tapir hide in the middle of the room while three to six women pull out her head hair in little bunches, [534] accompanied by a small drum (tambor) and rattle. She endures the operation calmly, not even drink being given to alleviate the pain. Her paternal uncle in a vigorous speech then instructs her about her future duties as a marriageable girl.

The masks are now surrendered, each owner receiving a piece of roast meat. The disguises are piled around the girl, until only her head protrudes. The cloth is then ripped and the shreds thrown over the house beams. The turury cloths, which now belong to the host, are wound up and put away.

The seclusion room and roast-meat stand are dismantled. The participants divide the pieces, going in a solemn procession to toss them into [482] the river. The girl is carried on the tapir hide held by five or six men over their heads in the procession. She undresses, and, kneeling in [751] shallow water where a magic arrow protects her against water demons, she is washed by all the men who have magical powers. She then redecorates herself and joins the dancers, who perform in the house until the last drop of beverage is drunk. At the end of the feast, everyone [522] bathes hilariously together, tossing each other into the water.

Formerly, in order to bring a large haul of fish, the girl was washed [226] again after the feast with a solution of timbó at an appropriate spot on [789] the creek.

Six to eight months later there is a supplementary but less ceremonial feast to trim the girl's regrown hair.

841 Subsequent menstruations entail few restrictions: a woman stays in her yard because the spirits of certain trees may injure her with an arrow and because contact with her would make a man inefficient in any undertaking.

836 **Marriage and adulthood.**—Sexual intercourse with prepubescent girls is unthinkable; with young women it brings shame on the whole family. There is no instance of ravishment. Rape is a grave offense to the parents.

584 A request for marriage is made to the girl's paternal uncle, but if the girl refuses peremptorily, she cannot be forced to marry. Public notice

2: Nimuendaju E-5 (1941-1942) 1948
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

is unnecessary; a boy and girl may meet at a feast and leave married at the end. The wife's parents never renounce their authority over her and do not permit the husband to take her far away, which results in a certain matrilocal tendency.

Polygyny even today is considered licit, but cases of bigamy are rare. In the only case known, a famous man who was both priest and chief had three sisters as wives simultaneously. Other cases of sororate have occurred. The levirate, also formerly frequent, was considered desirable.

Jealousy may cause violent quarrels between husband and wife, but never murder and rarely divorce. Adultery, though causing scenes, is insufficient reason for divorce. Guilt is always placed on the woman. The father's authority in the family is great.

In case of robbery, the offended party requires restitution and sometimes is extremely severe with the thief.

Injuries and death occur almost exclusively when people are drunk during a feast, for alcohol stimulates certain *Tucuna* to fight. Drunkenness absolves the murderer from responsibility, but the victim's relatives always feel resentful and hostile toward him.

A house is the property of its builder, i.e., the head of the family. The clearing belongs to the woman by whom it was made.

The *Tucuna* no longer have chiefs as they are too individualistic to accept authority and as the civilized people have discredited the office by designating chiefs through whom they could exploit and oppress the Indians. Formerly, chiefs of local groups were heads of large families whose magic powers, intelligence, and ability in dealing with foreigners gave them prestige. There was never, however, a chief for the entire nation.

Death.—Until the end of the past century, the deceased and all his ornaments were placed in a large chicha jar which was covered with a vessel, buried in a cemetery, and the site sometimes marked with a rod of muirapiranga. Well-liked people sometimes were buried in the house. They put a little food, beverage, and a fire on the grave, periodically renewing it. Tessmann (1930, p. 564) incorrectly attributed secondary burial to the *Tucuna*.

WARFARE

The *Tucuna* are not warlike. They defended themselves against the *Omagua*, their principal enemies, and drove them to the banks of the Solimões River only when the latter had invaded their lands. They fought with arrows, poisoned spears, and round tapir-hide shields, and protected their paths with poisoned caltrops. They did not take prisoners or keep trophies from slain enemy. They never fought civilized people, except to avenge personal insults.